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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

October 15, 2022

The UCC in the South

by Rev. Kim Wood

At the time of this writing, I have just departed from the beautiful Blowing Rock Conference Center in North Carolina, where I took part in the annual Retired Servants Retreat. For those of you who have never attended an event at Blowing Rock Conference Center, I hope you'll do so if the opportunity arises. Words cannot describe the grand presentation of nature that surrounds it, nor can they do justice to the amazing members of the staff team!



During this time together with people from both the Southeast and Southern Conferences, Southern Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Edward Davis and I invited folks into a conversation about the United Church of Christ in the South. We moved the conversation through three segments: history, challenges, and hopes for connections and our future. We were blessed to have folks present who have spent much of their ministry in the Southern Region and were able to offer a deep knowledge of where we have been and the trials along the way. We were equally blessed to have people who had come from or spent time in other regions of the UCC and brought comparative insights to our reflections. It was the beginning of a rich and important discussion that will help to frame how we continue to shape and move forward as the UCC in the South.

As I said, this is an important and ongoing conversation, one in which I invite you to participate. And so, I ask you these questions to get us started:

1. What is our history as the UCC in the South?

2. What have been the challenges of being the UCC in the South?
3. What are our current challenges and ones that we are likely to face?
4. What strengths do we as the UCC bring to the South?
5. Now and over the next 5 years, how does the UCC (SECUCC, Southern Region, National Setting) need to be present and engaged in the South?

I truly would like to hear from you! So please, take one of these paths to share your thoughts: send me an email at kwood@ucc.org. Call me at 404-615-2492. Work with our offices to arrange for an area gathering of clergy and laity to have a conversation together, either on Zoom or in person (Covid permitting). Go to our [Southeast Conference Facebook page](#) and look for these questions there. Please share what congregation or setting you are from, as well.

You are the real-time eyes and ears, hands and feet, and heart of the who we are as the Southeast Conference together. You see the people and hear their stories and their struggles, you experience and witness the pain and suffering, the marginalization and injustice, you care for, stand beside, and stand up for individuals and communities under attack and in need. Please lend your input to this conversation as we continue to discern God's call as a conference and with our sibling conferences in the South.

News from the Conference Office



Warrior Met Coal Mine Strike All-Conference Conversation

You are invited to join us **Monday, October 17 at 7 PM Eastern Time/6 PM Central Time** as we talk with members of the United Mine Workers (UMW) regarding the ongoing strike of workers from the Warrior Met mine in Bessemer, Alabama. The strike, which has been going for over 18 months, is causing hardship and suffering to over 800 families, leaving them unable to pay their housing and other bills, take care of their health, eat properly, or provide necessities for their children. These workers have endured unsafe work conditions, pay and benefit cuts, mandatory 16-hour days, reduced paid time off, just to name some key injustices foisted upon them.

The Southeast Association Board of Directors has recently signed a letter of support for the striking workers, and SECUCC staff, leadership, and local clergy are working with Rev. Sekinah Hamlin, UCC Minister for Economic Justice, as well as representatives from the UMW to magnify the voice of these workers and their families as they seek resolution the strike and seek to return to work under safe and just conditions.

We hope you'll participate in this conversation on Zoom, and that you'll share the link with other people in your congregations and ministry settings, your families and friends, and your wider communities. To attend, go to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86519254675?pwd=TFR5MzFQMfNVSkNMdDdpOEZKZnBwQT09>

Special Called Meeting of the Conference

The Southeast Conference UCC Board of Directors has called a special meeting of the Southeast Conference on **Thursday, October 27, 2022 at 7:30 PM Eastern Time/ 6:30 PM Central Time**. The meeting will be held virtually on Zoom, with a link that will be provided upon registration.

The sole purpose of this meeting is to discuss and vote upon an urgent matter regarding the 24th General Synod of the United Church of Christ to be held June 30 – July 4, 2023 online and onsite in Indianapolis, IN. The Conference will vote on the sponsorship of a resolution to be submitted to the 34th General Synod regarding the injustices and harm directed at people who are of transgender and non-binary experience. This will be the only item on the agenda for consideration. Registration materials and meeting materials will be distributed prior to the meeting.



Supporting those who are called to Ordained Ministry

One of the blessings of this conference is that we are a calling Conference. For the size of our Conference, we journey with a lot of people in their discernment towards Authorized Ministry in the United Church of Christ. In the Southeast Conference we use two different classifications, Person's In Exploration (PIEs) and Members in Discernment (MIDs). Person's In Exploration are individuals who have expressed interest in entering the process but have not turned in their initial documents and have not met with the Preparation for Authorized Ministry Team of our Commission on Ministry. Members in Discernment are those individuals who have been approved to begin the discernment process with the Southeast Conference. You can learn more about the [discernment process on our website](#).

Please hold our current Members in Discernment in prayer and their local churches as they journey with them in this process. Our Current MIDs:

- Kelly Rhyne, Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta
- Ceil Sheahan, Church of the Savior, Knoxville
- Ugena Whitlock, Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta
- Rochelle Lofstrand, Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta
- Whitney Walton, Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta
- Jennifer Sanders, Beloved Community Church, Birmingham
- Jenn Carlier, Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta
- Candace Rowell, Virginia Highland Church, Atlanta

- Amanda Edwards, Central Congregational, Atlanta
- Elliot Trojanoski, Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta
- Brian Wilmoth, United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville
- Paul Perry, Garden of Grace, Columbia
- JRea Rice-Cranford, United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville
- Eva Melton, Beloved Community Church, Birmingham
- Christopher Alexander, First Church, Atlanta
- Everette Thompson, Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta
- Gavin Warren, Holy Trinity, Nashville (Ordainable Pending Call)
- Thomas Mitchell, Church of the Savior, Knoxville (Ordainable Pending Call); Join us for Thomas' Ordination at Church of the Savior in Knoxville on November 12 at 2pm.

If you believe your name should be on this list and is not or you would like to begin the discernment process with the Southeast Conference- please reach out to Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org.

Ordination of Thomas Mitchell

The Commission on Ministry and Church of the Savior invites you to the Ordination of Thomas Mitchell on November 12, 2022 at 2:00 pm at Church of the Savior in Knoxville, TN.





Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2022. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of October 16

- Methodist Congregational Federated; Demorest, Georgia
- Soo Man Chang
- Artis Johnson
- Troy Sanders
- J Houston Wheeler
- Cindy Bovee-Kemper

Week of October 23

- First United Church UCC; Belvidere, Tennessee
- Sankofa UCC-Atlanta, Georgia
- Kwan Hae Chi
- Charmaine Penn Johnson
- Edward Schneider
- Ted Elsenheimer

Week of October 30

- Howard Congregational UCC; Nashville, Tennessee
- Kathy Clark
- Dahron Johnson
- Ann Schoup
- Heather Fosburgh

- Marvin Morgin

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; First United Church, Belvidere TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN; Brookemeade Congregational, Nashville TN; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; Sandy Creek, Lafayette AL

News from Our Local Congregations

First Church Atlanta member named acting President of Fisk University.

The Board of Trustees of Fisk University recently announced that Board Chair Frank L. Sims will serve as acting President. Mr. Sims, an active member of First Congregational Church in Atlanta, has long been a valued member of the community and a trusted advisor to Fisk. He retired in 2008 from Cargill, Inc. where he led major strategic business segments both in the United States and internationally. He brings experience and stability to his new position, having previously served as Interim President of the University from 2015-2017.

News from the Wider Church

We are Praying for Those Impacted by Recent Disasters

The UCC Disaster Ministry team sends our love, support, and prayers for those impacted by the hurricane and ask that you do the same. The devastation from this storm is historic and Southwest Florida will be rebuilding for some time.

The United Church of Christ stands at the point of need with the message that, no matter what, God is with us. Disaster Ministries participates in long-term recovery efforts, supplying much needed funding and volunteers as we work to fulfil our mission: *Responding to the call of our Christ-centered faith, UCC Disaster Ministries supports holistic community recovery by engaging supporters, volunteers, and partners to focus on preparedness, emergency relief, and long-term recovery.*

Please Help:

- Pray for those impacted.
- Put together CWS kits and clean-up buckets. [Learn more.](#)
- Help is needed to move some of the kits we have received to the CWS warehouse in Maryland. If you can help, please reach out to [Karl Jones.](#)
- Donate: [Donate Now – United Church of Christ \(ucc.org\)](#)
- Sign up to Volunteer: <https://support.ucc.org/volunteer-opportunity-form>
- Volunteer Opportunities: [UCC Ministry Opportunities](#)
- Have your congregation join the Willing to Respond Network of Churches: [Willing to Respond Preparedness Network](#)

Trainings, Conferences & Events



2023 Winter Youth Retreat

With continued COVID-19 mitigation efforts, the efforts of our churches, and the staff at the Blowing Rock Conference Center we are pleased to announce that we will be holding WYR 2023. Our friends from Alethea will be joining us for a weekend of storytelling, experiential education, service, and of course fun in the snow on January 13-16, 2023. Registration is now open. Group Leaders, please [click here to register your full group](#). The early registration fee until December 1, 2022, is \$185.00. All registrations after December 1, 2022 are \$200.00. We look forward to seeing you on the mountain.

PATHWAYS Theological Education Classes Available

PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc., invites you to explore its Progressive Christian theological education courses. Through the website you can connect with the Registrar about your interests and questions.

[Courses announced to date](#) for Winter I Term (January 2023) include: UCC History and Polity, and a new Clinical Pastoral Education for Urban Settings. Other courses are available through conversation and expressed needs.

To view the PATHWAYS core three-level curriculum for ministerial preparation, leadership development and continuing education, go to the [Ministerial Preparation](#) page on the PATHWAYS website. To express an interest and explore further what courses may be available for the Winter 1 Term (January 2023), please contact the Registrar, Melissa Ashmore, (registrar@pathwaystheological.org) for a conversation about your interests and needs.

Our participants include:

- students in preparation for ordination to the ministry as pastors;
- ordained pastors with a passion for continuing education;
- church members whose gifts include Bible Study leadership, youth ministry, children's ministry, and worship design;
- seminary students seeking additional education;
- community leaders whose work includes building coalitions across faith traditions; and
- those exploring calls to chaplaincy in hospitals, hospices, prisons, and other specialized settings.

Our courses are affordable, asynchronous, and online for maximum flexibility to fit the schedules of busy people who still want to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith. Each course offers participants the opportunity to develop competency in the subject matter as well as the chance to meet and work with a diverse group from across the United States. Whether you are called to a pastoral role, a congregational or community leader seeking new skills, or a curious inquirer, PATHWAYS has courses to expand your thinking, enhance your knowledge, and exhilarate your soul.

Interim Ministry Classes and Training

by Rev. Marvin L. Morgan

There appears to be an increasing demand for "trained interim pastors" within the UCC. I am pleased to announce, through a special arrangement

through the Center for Congregational Health (where I currently serve as a faculty member), to offer the combined (IM1 & IM2) Interim Ministry classes, via zoom, in 8 4-hour segments. These virtual sessions, to be followed by Field Work will be available as follows:

- (WEEK 1) - MON NOV 14, 2022 THUR NOV 17, 2022
- (WEEK 2) - MON NOV 28, 2022 THUR DEC 01, 2022

12 pm - 4 pm (Eastern Time) or 9 am - 1 pm (Mountain Time). The full course description and registration link can be viewed on the CCH website: https://healthychurch.org/events-and-training/interim-ministry-classes-training/?event_id1=7135

Creating Communities of Inclusion and Belonging for Youth with Disabilities with Dr. Erik Carter, Ph.D.

November 2nd; 12 - 1:30 pm ET

Many faith communities still struggle to welcome and weave youth with disabilities into the ministries and relationships that make up the life of their congregation. Yet we are called to be communities without asterisks. Dr. Carter will share a powerful framework for reflecting upon and fostering belonging within youth and other congregational ministries. Together, we will explore the implications of this work on the ways we support youth with disabilities and on the ways we spur our own churches to be more inclusive and welcoming.

Register at: [Creating Communities of Inclusion and Belonging for Youth with Disabilities](#)

Conference Calendar

October 14 - October 16

[UCC Southern Region Women's Retreat](#)

October 17 @ 7:00 pm EDT

[Warrior Met Coal Mine Strike All-Conference Conversation](#)

October 18 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 20 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EDT

[Live Harp Meditations for Ministers](#)

October 25 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT

[Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers](#)

October 25 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

October 27 @ 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

[Special Called Meeting of the Conference](#)

View the full calendar of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

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Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

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